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By Art Carey  
Inquirer Staff Writer

When the news broke, it stirred haunting visions of George Orwell's "1984."

Here was the CIA, bent on developing the ultimate means of mind control, secretly passing out funds to researchers so that they could study drugs, hypnosis, shock treatment and even magicians.

Among those whose work the CIA funded were several New Jersey scientists who, in the early 1960s, conducted LSD experiments on inmates at the Bordentown Reformatory.

For those with active imaginations, the disclosures of the last few weeks have brought forth chilling scenarios — trench-coated CIA operatives slipping envelopes full of cash to nervous scientists in dark parking lots; researchers lacing the food of unwitting prisoners with powerful doses of illicit, mind blowing drugs.

Great stuff for a movie or TV drama, no doubt, but the reality of the experiments was far less dramatic and sinister, according to those who worked on the project 15 years ago at the New Jersey Bureau of Research in Neurology and Psychiatry.

First, the experiments were conducted with scrupulous care and followed established and ethical procedures, they say. The subjects were all adult volunteers who gave their informed consent, and the results of the studies were published at the time in national scientific journals.

What's more, the project was undertaken at a time when both LSD and the CIA were regarded as being far more benign than they are today.

"In today's post-Watergate climate, everybody is paranoid about everything," said Dr. Bernard S. Aaronson, 53, a California psychologist who took part in the experiments. "But in those days, the CIA had a very good reputation. I don't believe anybody at the Bureau of Research was a CIA agent or was acting with any sort of improper or unethical motives."

tist knew that the CIA was involved, and that was Dr. Carl C. Pfeiffer, then chief of the bureau's neuropharmacology section.

It was Dr. Pfeiffer who conceived of the LSD project, sought research funds and invited colleagues in other scientific disciplines to collaborate.

Highly respected in his field, Dr. Pfeiffer is now director of the Brain Bio Center in Princeton. In a statement released after the disclosures (he has refused to be interviewed), Dr. Pfeiffer labeled recent reports about the experiments "a witch-hunt" and insisted that the project met modern ethical standards.

This claim is confirmed by state officials and by Dr. Pfeiffer's former colleagues. From them, a picture of the project—its aims, scope and operation—has emerged. And it is a picture far less lurid and iniquitous than the headlines and early news accounts may have suggested.

At the time of the experiments—from 1962 to 1964—the Bureau of Research, which closed in 1973, was in a building on the grounds of the New Jersey Neuropsychiatric Institute in Skillman. Five days a week, inmates from the Bordentown Reformatory reported to the institute for an experiment session for which they were paid 50 cents.

Scientists at the bureau invited the inmates to be subjects in an experiment involving LSD that, among other things, was aimed at exploring how the drug works and how it affects perception and behavior.

After careful screening to weed out those with possible psychotic or violent tendencies, ages of 21 and 25 were chosen, and each signed a consent contract before participating.

The project was approved by three state agencies as well as the reformatory's board of managers. A report submitted to the State Department of Corrections estimated that the project would cost \$35,000 and would be funded by the U.S. Public Health Service and a number of private agencies. There was no mention of the CIA, however.

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P Pfeiffer, Carl C.  
(orig under Carey)

## Utmost care

Scientists who worked with Dr. Pfeiffer say that he supervised the experiments with the utmost care and precision and that he took the drug himself 17 times.

"There was no surreptitious administration of drugs; no one was slipping Miceys into someone's drink" said Dr. Henry B. Murphree, 49, then assistant chief of the bureau's neuropharmacology section and now acting chairman of the psychiatry department at Rutgers University Medical School.

"The LSD was given only after fully informed consent, and the subject could drop out any time he pleased, including in the middle of the experiment."

With one exception—and even that is questionable—none of the subjects seem to have suffered any ill effects from the LSD. "The doses were too minimal to have had any effect," said Dr. Aaronson, who has written a book on LSD.

The one case in which LSD may have emotionally damaged a subject was reported by Frances E. Cheek, 53, a sociologist who studied four of the inmates for the effects of the drug on social interaction.

"One inmate began to develop suspicions that his wife had taken a lover and threatened to break out and murder her," she wrote later in the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease.

But the drug produced favorable results with another inmate, Dr. Cheek said recently. Through LSD, he envisioned himself killing someone at some future date. Apparently, the experience was so frightening that he abandoned a career as an armed robber, "went straight" and became a responsible family man, she said.

"LSD is a very powerful drug that cuts both ways," said Ms. Cheek, modification program at the Neuropsychiatric Institute. "It can have both positive and negative effects."

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